

David K. E. Bruce, 79, Diplomat Who Served Six Presidents, Dies

Associated Press

David K. E. Bruce, a veteran American diplomat who served in a variety of posts including mainland China, died of a heart attack today at Georgetown University Medical Center. He was 79.

The center issued a statement saying that Bruce was admitted to the hospital's coronary care unit at 10 o'clock last night and died about four hours later.

Bruce had a long list of diplomatic credentials gained in service under six presidents — from Harry S. Truman to Gerald R. Ford. He had served as ambassador to Germany, France and Britain.

Then-President Richard M. Nixon tapped him as the first head of the U.S. liaison office in Peking after relations between the United States and mainland China warmed in 1973.

Bruce's previous Asian experience included an 18-month assignment as chief U.S. negotiator at the Vietnam peace talks in Paris beginning in 1969, a job that brought him out of retirement.

Bruce retired again on Aug. 1, 1971, for reasons of health, he said, but the China assignment returned him once again to the diplomatic ranks.

In 1974, Ford named the silver-haired diplomat to be U.S. ambassador to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. He served in that post for 16 months, and then retired from the diplomatic corps in February 1976 at the age of 78.

On his retirement, Ford presented him with the Medal of Freedom.

Bruce was born in Baltimore on Feb. 12, 1898, the son of U.S. Sen. William Cabell Bruce and Louise Este Bruce. He studied at Princeton and at the universities of Virginia and Maryland. He served as an artilleryman in France in World War I.

Besides his diplomatic tours, he served as chief representative of the American Red Cross in London in 1940 and from 1941 to 1945. He also directed the European operations of the Office of Strategic Services, the predecessor of the Central Intelligence Agency.